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Helping Migrant Workers

USAID Training Enables Local NGO to Protect Labor Migrants



Upon return from the study tour, Mr. Khudayberdiev initiated a six-month project at NCSSC.

Photo: NCSSC

“Thanks to the information and contacts gained with the assistance of USAID programs, we can effectively help Kyrgyz labor migrants work legally in Kazakhstan and Russia.”

- Mr. Abduvali Khudayberdiev, the Director of the Nookat Civil Society Support Center

Nookat is a town of 14,000 nestled in a valley in the mountains of southern Kyrgyzstan. The town has no industry to speak of, and insufficient land for all of its population to work in agriculture, and thus, few opportunities for gainful employment. Many of Nookat's citizens travel seasonally to Kazakhstan and Russia looking for work as unregistered/illegal migrant workers. While this provides them with supplemental income, it is a risky endeavor, subjecting these workers to dubious work arrangements and trafficking rings.

To help solve this problem and combat trafficking in Nookat and other communities, in 2004, USAID's Participant Training Program (implemented by the Academy for Educational Development) and Trafficking in Persons Project (implemented by Winrock International) arranged a study tour to Ukraine for NGO leaders focused on combating trafficking. One of the study tour participants was the Director of the Nookat Civil Society Support Center (NCSSC), Mr. Abduvali Khudayberdiev.

“Through this program I learned about the Ukrainian methodology of consulting labor migrants, and established partnerships with my Kazakhstani and Russian colleagues,” says the NCSSC director. “Now we can effectively help Kyrgyz labor migrants work legally in these two countries.”

After returning from the USAID-sponsored study tour, Mr. Khudayberdiev initiated a six-month project to provide legal assistance to migrant workers from Nookat City. The project was funded jointly by USAID's Trafficking in Persons Project and the Nookat Civil Society Support Center. The Center created four initiative groups that carried out public outreach campaigns to inform communities about the rights of migrant workers, and offered consultations to community members about official registration in Russia and Kazakhstan. As a result, 82 community members applied to the NCSSC for consultation on how to receive their official registration as labor migrants. They have all been registered by the administrations of internal affairs of Russia and Kazakhstan as labor migrants and have received work permits.